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ABSTRACT

It is suggested that most students of English as a Second Language are more inclined toward video than print as a source of information and stimulation, and that to be successful, teaching methods must bridge this gap. An approach using comparison of different versions of one text, here Shakespeare's "Macbeth," is described. The 3-step technique uses film and videotape recordings, and also requires that students read the original text without study aids. The first step is to find familiar literature with various media versions. "Macbeth" has several film versions featuring noted actors and directors and from different decades and cultures, and a film version of a stage presentation. Music composed specifically for the drama can also be analyzed. The written text is used between film versions to compare and contrast interpretations and use of language. A list of Chinese films and related texts is offered as an alternative to Shakespeare. The second step of the technique is to explore differences in texts by comparing basic text elements, setting, narrative, characterization, symbols, structure/composition, viewpoint, time, and focus. The third step has students create or locate companion texts for an existing written text and/or film/video. A 31-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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From Writing to Media with Literature in EFL

Reta A. Gilbert

The problem is clear. We the teachers of EFL are primarily print people. We curl up with the Times Literary Supplement or the New York Review of Books. We spend hours in bookstores. Our idea of a significant social event is a new book, a glass of wine, and a good reading light. We devour books, essays, magazines, journals, play scripts, anything in print. Watch television? Yes, we comb the television guides to find a favorite program note its time then turn on the television for that special show. We treat television as an event. We watch then we shut if off and pick up the newspaper.

Our students on the other hand are media people. They get up and turn on the television. A morning show dominates breakfast. Walking to and from class requires Walkmans tuned to the local rock music station. Then there is the obligatory stop at an arcade for video games. Non-class hours are often spent at the computer. Video disks bring the entire world past and present to a 7 by 4 inch screen. Video media are the world our students live in. They get their news and entertainment; they seek advice and vote for their favorite sport's team without getting up from their chairs.

Only reluctantly students leave their media world to come to class where we announce: "Please turn to page 84. We will explore the symbolism of *Macbeth* this morning." The books open but the minds stay closed. What are these strange words written by a man who has been dead for hundreds of years. What does he know about anything -- especially anything important? Dutifully the good students take notes for the inevitable examination but real learning shuts down.

How do we bridge this gap? How do print people communicate with media people? The stakes are high. The learning of the next generation is at risk. Will no one ever hand search a Humanities Index again? Will every paper you read from now until you retire depend only on sources available from computer data bases? How do we initiate visual learners into the mysteries of the print text?

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The answer to this question is the central thesis of this essay. We begin by meeting the students half-way. We learn about the world of film and video and insist our students read novels and plays without the benefit of Cliff Notes or comic book aids. We use film and video texts as well as written ones in classes.

STEP 1: Begin with literature you have taught for years and use various media versions to demonstrate to yourself and to your students the differences in texts. For example: begin with Shakespeare with *Macbeth*. There are several different film versions available as well as a film of a stage version of the play -- enough for weeks of lessons on media differences.

The place to begin with *Macbeth* would be a film version of Olivier's second performance if you could find it. His first time playing Macbeth at the Old Vic when he was thirty was soon forgotten when at forty-eight he tried the role again. Critics and fellow actors alike acclaimed his success. This was the definitive *Macbeth* claims John Gielgud; Olivier had murder in his heart from the moment he came one stage. (Gielgud, 1979/1981) Olivier explains:

> I had at that time, most importantly of all, lungs like organ bellows, vocal power and range that no infection could seemingly affect, and bodily expression balanced by techniques that could control all physical expressiveness from dead stillness to an almost acrobatic agility; my performances were apt to have, if anything, too much vitality. (Olivier, 1982/1984, Pp. 200-201)

Alternately use Gielgud's *Macbeth* if you can find a film version. He explains that the imaginative side of Macbeth's character appealed to him:

> I knew that I would not be able to play the warrior, the giant who cleaves people 'from the nave to the chaps', but I found a romantic and visionary quality in the character, and a weakness which emerges when his wife urges him to murder Duncan. My interpretation was the absolute opposite of Olivier's. . . . I thought that Macbeth, when he first comes on, should be what everyone had said he is in the first two scenes, the great warrior chieftain, loyal to Duncan, victorious in battle, flushed with great success. Then he meets the witches and afterwards comes home to his wife, and

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> these two meetings, at such a critical moment in his career, suddenly topple him from his nobility. (Gielgud, 1979/1981, p. 74)

The differences between these approaches set the tone for cross-media studies. To listen to William Walton's music composed especially to go with one of Gielgud's productions of *Macbeth* would be a special treat for students and could strengthen the discussion of different media or different texts.

The Orson Welles' film version of *Macbeth* (1948) provides an excellent example for class discussion of texts. Welles cut the play down to eighty-six minutes, he rearranged scenes, and he added lines from other Shakespearean plays. He announces his approach in a short proclamation given in the beginning over shots of the witches at work among the swirling mists. His message: "Macbeth is a story which involves 'plotting against Christian law and order'; the hostile forces were 'agents of chaos, priests of hell and magic' making use of 'ambitious men' to achieve their dark and primal purpose." (Manvell, 1979, p. 56) This new thematic purpose translated into a unique Welles' film. There are dozens of teaching points. Welles thought the original sound track sounded too American so he rerecorded over two thirds of it in a more Scottish dialect. (Manvell, 1979) Part of the weakness of Jeanette Nolan's Lady Macbeth is in her relatively expressionless voice. She was a radio actress in her first film. The story moves quickly. Symbols such as the white fur bed establish a sensual presence not seen in other versions. (Cowie, 1973) Harsh shadows, strange writhing shapes, and deformed contextual features set the mood.

Welles announced he wanted an atmosphere of sheer 'Stonehenge-powerful, unrelieved tragedy.' (Cowie, p. 113) The film is rife with striking compositions and violent visual contrasts. Mullen calls our attention to the way the camera treats Macbeth:

> Many of the shots are from waist level, looking up so that Welles' face seems to tower over the viewer and when his hand is extended it looms grotesquely large as it nears the camera. Many of his lines are spoken as the camera looks elsewhere: the most famous instance being the swirling mists and clouds into which we look with Macbeth as he utters his despair: Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow . . . (Vv 19-28) (Mullin, 1973, p. 337)

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This is a visual world of darkness and foreboding. We watch and wait for the inevitable. As Harper concludes: the fates await. (Harper, 1986) The Welles' film provides a superb example of the contributions visual texts can make to understanding a work.

A film of *Macbeth* which students invariably like and we print types often deplore is the Roman Polanski version. Developed in London with Kenneth Tynan, Polanski's Macbeth and his wife are a young, attractive, but doomed couple. Their character is flawed. Tynan explained: "They don't know they're involved in a tragedy; they think they're on the verge of a triumph predicted by the witches." (Polanski, 1984, p. 316) The discovery of the dark side of their own natures is the cause of the tragedy. Obviously the original text had little influence on Polanski. His aim was to "construct a spectacular and coherent framework that would underpin and amplify the text, lending it even more resonance." (P. 317)

Polanski's world is that of the 1970s. Lady Macbeth is nude in the sleepwalking scene; Playboy financed the production. Shooting took place in Wales where the dark leaden skies coupled with frequent on screen scenes of violence distinguished the production. Rothwell calls it a "banquet of cruelty" (1973) Berlin "a revelation in gore." (1973) For Polanski Macbeth is the embodiment of brutality and evil. (McDougal, 1985) Critics emphasized the supernatural, occult symbolism. In the American press, comparisons to the Manson murders were inevitable. The film was not a commercial success, but it does provide a text with which students identify. There is an energy and vitality in Polanski's film. He presents a world beyond the old standards of civility, a world gone mad. We may deplore this world, but it exists all around us.

A third version of *Macbeth* more acceptable to print people is the 1960 film version directed by George Schaefer. This resembles a theatrical stage version and makes an excellent contrast with Welles. Maurice Evans plays Macbeth and Judith Anderson his wife. Neither gave strong visual performances. (Manvell, 1979) This is truly an example of a previous technology as the subject of a later one. The "literal-minded realism" of the production while visually dull makes an excellent contrast to the more graphic versions. (Mullin, 1973) The text follows the original more closely than any other film does. Comparisons of key scenes are instructive.

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Akira Kurosawa's version of *Macbeth,* Throne of Blood (1957), has the most possibilities for textual comparison. Kurosawa saw *Macbeth* as a struggle for power with "limitations, negation and death" the major themes. (Richie, 1984, p. 115) Richie explains:

> The film is extraordinarily visual. The imagery is so simple: fog, wind, trees, mist--the forest and the castle. There has rarely been a blacker and a whiter black and white film. He purposely restricts himself. The only punctuation he allows is the simple cut and the simple wipe. There are no fades, no dissolves, nothing soft, nothing flowing, nothing amorphous. Everything is rigidly either/or. Washizu's banner carried the totemic emblem of the predatory centipede; the flag of the innocent Miki holds a rabbit. Things are as they are, preordained, named. (P. 120)

Everywhere the influence of the traditional Japanese Noh drama is evident. In an interview with Sato, Kurosawa explains that the mask itself determines the actor's interpretation. To guide the interpretation of Toshiro Mifune as he played Taketoki Washizu (Macbeth) Kurosawa showed him the mask of *Heida*, the warrior. The witch studied the mask called *Yamanba*. Pictorially the play replicates a Japanese painting. (Manvell, 1979) (Zambrano,)

The critics disagree severely about the value of Kurosawa's *Macbeth*. Blumenthal argues that Kurosawa created a masterpiece of visual images, but not everyone agrees. The crux of the debate turns on Kurosawa's substitution of extraordinary images for Shakespeare's outstanding use of language. Kinder's analysis of the film provides a superb lesson in texts across cultures. (1977) She notes: in Shakespeare's version, Macbeth is a type of existential hero. His total commitment to evil comes in spite of realizing his course is futile. Kurosawa uses a set of visual opposites to develop this moral conflict first with the tension between performance and observation. Then both audience and performer vacillate between observation and evaluation. A second visual opposite is between "the concreteness of the art and the elusiveness of reality" (P. 340) and a third between motion and stasis. The whole effect is like a dance, between camera, actors, and text.

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Some critics felt that the "strict and uncluttered" view of the castle mirrored the social order. Donaldson who reviews the various symbol systems in the production analyzes the film both as Shakespearean drama and as part of Japanese culture. (1990) Fog and mist symbolize Washizu's thoughts; reaction in the natural world comes before the murders thus functioning as an omen of the future. Horses function as a correlative to the natural order. (McDougal, 1985) (McDonald, 1987) Comparisons of concept, goals, cultural values, theatrical conventions, credibility, pictorial vocabularies are plentiful in this film. Western students often comment on how this film is so modern --a conclusion based on the intensity of Kurosawa's vision which transforms both the time and rhythms of *Macbeth*. (Bazerman, 1977) But there is no intent to recreate reality only the attempt to transfer a vision.

In between and among the showings of at least two film versions of *Macbeth* the instructor should go back and forth to the written text to compare and contrast interpretations, to show how language functions to build verbal images. The result: students invariable appreciate the print text and understand more of it than if they were forced to rely on words alone for their visual images. Everyone uses their own pictorial vocabulary to visualize new concepts. By supplying students with various codes we give them the means to create a more complex meaning paradigm than they could manage from words alone.

If Shakespeare is not appropriate for your class several Chinese films are available for comparison to short stories or to novels. The following list may suggest a place to begin:

Film	Novel/Short Story
A Girl from Hunan	Shen Cogwen. *Xiao Xiao*
Blood Stains on the Screen	Adaptation of a Judge Dee novel
A Small Town Called Hibiscus	From the novel by Gu Hua.
Wu Song	*Outlaws of the Marsh*
Heroic Sons and Daughters	From the novel by Pa Chin
Red Crag	From the novel by Lo Kuang-pin and Yang Yi-yen
Threshold of Spring	From the novel by Jou Shih
Dream of the Red Chamber	From the novel by Tsao Hsueh-chin
Red Sun	From the novel by Wu Chiang
Hurricane	From the novel by Chou Li-po

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STEP 2: The second step toward media literacy is to explore the differences in texts taking novels, films, and videos as representative forms. See Table 1. This comparison uses categories taken from novels since readers of this essay will be familiar with that base. If the readers were primarily media people the criteria would reflect that difference.

Table 1

Media Comparisons

Novels	*Films*	*Videos*
<u>Basic Elements</u>		
Word-sentence-paragraph	Shots	Shots
	Scene	"Chains of
Chapter	Sequence	disparate images"
Novel - Short Story	Continuity - Film	
<u>Setting</u>		
Mood - Tone	Mood	Series of mood
	states	
Images - Metaphors	Image	Image is reality
	Lighting of Subject;	Uses bold images
	Relation of Subject	Expresses
	to Frame; Distance	instability of life
	between camera and	Equates product with
	subject; angle of vision	experience
	of subject; visual inter-	No distance between
	action between images	character &
	in succession	performer
<u>Narrative</u>		
Theme	Storyline	Impression/Feeling
		loosely
		connected
		to a theme

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Characterization Open Motivation: Inner or Outer Dialogue based on individual character	Open	No heroes Everyone is a celebrity No distinctions between character and performance Look more important than characterization
Symbols Open	Sign, Movement Time, space, color Sound, definition, Impact, style	Mostly of power As atmosphere not action Frequently of violence or sex
Structure/Composition Plots - subplots Irony Foreshadowing Conflict Complex of emotions and action Omissions significant	Lighting/Tonal contrast Position Movement of people & objects within frame; within camera itself; focus, structural editing Montage - rhythm Sequence leads to closure	Discontinuous episodes, fast pace "Dreamy" structure Not real time "Short bursts of sensual energy" Non-stop sequence Performers glance at self in previous shot Relies on memory retrieval
Point of View Reader is a fixed distance from the work Writer adopts a unified point of view Single author	Camera viewpoint Distance varies May be viewers eye, narrator's eye, or participant in events Editing permits varied points of view	Of celebrity Of spectator
Time Real time imaginatively Chronological time as an act of remembrance	What is important is in past or present Has beginning & end	Past & present the same; no beginning or end Disconnected Time forever

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Focus		
On details	On emotional response	Aims for euphoria
On characterization	Very involving	Primarily experience
Or on plot	A more public experience	Triggers blocks of disconnected images
On narrative		On selling products
Reading a private experience		Performance dominates
May have significant cognitive element		

* Compiled from (Aufderheide, 1986)(Costanzo, 1986)(Fry, & Fry, 1987)(German, 1990)(Hulseberg, 1978)(Jacobs, 1950)(Jorgens, 1983)(Kear, 1988)(Kinder, 1984)(Korac, 1988) (Moss, 1980)(Prentice, 1990) (Toland A.S.C., 1970)

A novel, of course, generally is based on characters and plot. The mood, images, and symbols function to advance a basic narrative. There are differences both within cultures and because of time in plot and structure. Usually a single author adopts a unified point of view. The focus is on details, on characterization, on plot, or even on setting.

Films are the beginning of visual communication media. Single shots combine to form a scene. Several scenes make up a sequence. Sequences are sewn together into a film. Mood springs from images determined by lighting, frames, camera distances, angles of vision and other interaction techniques. Movement, time, space, color, and sound are significant elements. The structure is essentially montage but each sequence leads to closure. There is a beginning and an end. The focus is on emotional responses thus films can be very involving.

The real media difference is obvious with videos. Videos are sequences of disconnected images only loosely connected to a theme. The main characters are celebrities performing. To the viewer what you see is real. The look not the character is important. Symbols of power predominate as atmosphere not of action. The pace is fast. The structure is almost dream-like. A sensual energy pulsates with the rhythm. Everything is disconnected. There are no beginnings or endings. The aim is to trigger a good feeling, or to sell an idea. Performance dominates. Everyone is a spectator.

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The differences are significant just between novels, films, and videos without considering computers, television, or any of the other media available today. Once students understand the characteristics of each media the next step is to encourage student creation of different texts.

STEP 3: Have your students create companion texts. If a written and a film text exist ask students to plan a video. If you have the time let the students actually create a video to show the class. Ask students to find companion video texts for a novel or a film. Students who get involved in companion text searches invariably study the written texts carefully. One good example such as the *Macbeth* series will set off this exploration.

Literacy in the twenty-first century will be defined quite differently than it is today. The shift from orality to writing to the electronic processing of messages both changes the ways we process incoming information and the ways we share that information with others. Students today need to understand electronic media but they also need to be a part of the print culture. Print culture literacy is essential for the leaders of tomorrow. The challenge is how to achieve this multi-literacy in today's EFL classroom.

As Louise Rosenblatt (1983) reminds us: ". . . . the reader draws on past experience of life and language to elicit meaning from the printed words . . . he organizes past experience to attain new understanding." (P. 26) The problem for our students is that their past experience gives them NO base to interpret many written texts. Literature is not a craft it is an art. (Rosenblatt, p. 29) To engage students in this art requires careful contrasts of texts.

This transactional theory of reading may also explain response to film and video. The reader or viewer creates meaning from the interchange with text. As Kear (1988) reminds us: Readers come to a text not as passive recipients but as active participants who bring unique backgrounds, personalities, interests, and approaches with which to discover meaning. We, the teachers, read first then see pictures in our mind. Students see first then they imagine. To open up the world of novels, drama, maybe even poetry to those we teach, let us first begin with film or video. If the result is an enrichment and appreciation of the world's literatures we can hardly do less.

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